



IN TIME OF DEATH AND MOURNING

A Guide for the members of
Holy Blossom Temple
prepared by
Rabbi Harvey J. Fields



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אֵךְ טוֹב וְחֶסֶד יִרְדְּפוּנִי כָּל-יְמֵי חַיִּי,
וְשִׁבְתִּי בְּבֵית-יְיָ לְאָרֶךְ יָמִים.

Surely goodness and mercy shall
follow me all the days of my life,
And I shall dwell in the house
of the Lord forever.

(Psalm 23:6)

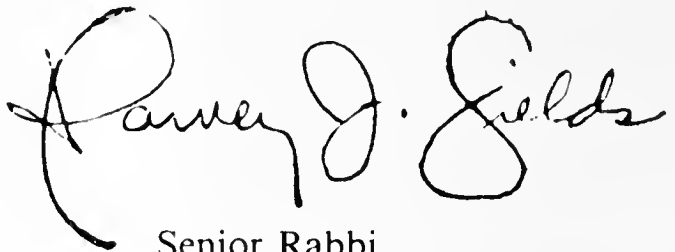
IN OUR GRIEF

Rabbi Joshua Loth Liebman has written that “Judaism teaches us to understand death as a part of the Divine pattern of the universe. . .we would not have our sensitivity without fragility.”

Yet even with those wise words as guide death brings with it deep wounds, great pain and suffering. We are lonely in our grief. We miss what death robs us of, all the warmth and sharing that makes the human journey so joyful and meaningful.

Jewish tradition seeks to help us through the “valley of the shadows.” It is wise in its rituals and sensitive to our need to express our sorrow, anger, frustration and love. Our faith nurtures in us the understanding that life is a gift with its seasons. Some are short and others long. Each has its meaning. The dust returns to the dust but the spirit lives on as memory, love and goodness continue to endure and enrich the world.

This pamphlet is meant to help us in our time of grief. It will not answer all questions or doubts. For that we need time and sharing. Your rabbis will always be ready to meet with you and help you to find solace. Please do not hesitate to call upon us.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Harvey J. Fields". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial 'H' and 'F'.

Senior Rabbi
Holy Blossom Temple.

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IN PREPARATION: One should purchase cemetery plots, and discuss with his/her family any special wishes about a funeral or the use of one's body so that the sensitivities of survivors may be protected.

AUTOPSY: Autopsy is permitted in Reform Judaism. Indeed the practice is recommended if the purpose is the increase of medical knowledge.

ORGAN TRANSPLANTS AND DONATING BODY TO SCIENCE. Reform approves of donating parts of one's body for transplantation in order to save another human being. It permits the donation of the body to a medical institution providing that it is buried or cremated after the study is completed. (*Gates of Mitzvah, CCAR*)

CREMATION: Reform Judaism recognizes that burial is the normative Jewish practice, but raises no objection to cremation or entombment in a mausoleum.

DATES AND TIME FOR FUNERAL: Funerals are **not** held on Shabbat, Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, the first and last day of Sukkot, the first and last day of Pesach and Shavuot. The Rabbi's office should be informed as soon as death occurs, and the hour of the service should be decided upon with consultation of the Rabbi. While Reform Jews do not strictly adhere to the custom of immediate burial, a funeral should not be delayed needlessly. As soon as the family is able to get together the funeral should be held.

COFFIN AND FLOWERS: Simplicity and dignity govern in Jewish funeral arrangements. A simple wooden coffin is preferable. The same pertains to flowers. The family may wish to order a simple spray of flowers and request that contributions be made to the Temple or to another worthy charity. The coffin is closed for the funeral service.

EMBALMING: Jewish tradition teaches that the body is to be returned to the earth from which it came. "Embalming is discouraged except when required by law or circumstances." (*Gates of Mitzvah, CCAR*).

CLOTHING: Traditionally, the Jewish dead are buried in **tachrichim** or linen shrouds. These may be used but ordinary clothing is also permitted. A tallit, if requested by the deceased, is also appropriate.

VIEWING OF THE BODY: "Jewish tradition is opposed to the public viewing of the deceased in an open coffin." (*Gates of Mitzvah, CCAR*) Should the family wish to view the body, privately, this is permissible but not necessary.

KERIAH: It is customary to tear a garment of the mourner as a symbol of sadness at the loss suffered. The mourner will be given a black ribbon to be worn at the funeral, and the rabbi will cut the ribbon at the beginning of the funeral service. The blessing said at the time of **Keriah** is found on page 6 of this pamphlet.

MOURNING Mourning is observed for parents, husband, wife, son, daughter, brother, sister. Mourning is not observed for an infant less than thirty days old.

SHIVA It is customary to observe shiva for a seven day period following the funeral. "The first three days of the shiva period are considered the most intense and in Reform congregations are considered the minimum mourning period." (*Gates of Mitzvah, CCAR*) It is a mitzvah for friends to visit mourners at this time, and for worship services to be conducted in the home. Our Temple Mitzvah Committee will conduct the service in your home and provide the special booklet for this purpose. The minyan for such a service in Reform Judaism includes both men and women present. On Shabbat no minyan is conducted at home. The family customarily attends services at Temple. It is customary to conclude Shiva observance with a special prayer for the conclusion of Shiva. (see page 7 of this pamphlet).

MEMORIAL LIGHTS: A light is kindled in the home of the deceased after burial and is kept burning continuously for seven days. Thereafter a light is kindled annually on the Yahrzeit date in the home of every mourner. When the family returns home from the cemetery they should gather before the memorial candle (A prayer for this purpose is found on page 6 of this pamphlet).

COVERING OF MIRRORS: The practice of covering mirrors and pictures is of superstitious origin and has been discontinued among many Reform Jews.

THE THIRTY DAYS OR SCHLOSHIM In the thirty day period, including shiva, mourners ought to refrain from attending public entertainments, but may attend meetings concerned with civic, religious or welfare matters and may also proceed with weddings previously arranged. Thereafter mourners return to normal activities at a rate which meets with their own personal needs.

KADDISH: It is customary for mourners to say Kaddish during the first year following the death. Kaddish may be recited at our Daily Services at 5:45 P.M. Monday through Thursday and Sunday at 9:00 A.M. See your Temple Bulletin for Shabbat and Holiday schedules.

VISITING THE CEMETERY: Except for Shabbat and Holy Days, the cemetery may be visited at any time. No special period needs to elapse after the funeral, although many wait for thirty days.

Yahrzeit: It is customary to attend services at the synagogue on the Yahrzeit, and to make donations to the Temple or another worthy charity in honour of our loved ones. The annual anniversary of the death of a near relative is observed on the date of death (not the date of burial). Some observe the Yahrzeit in accordance with the Jewish calendar. Others do so in accordance with the civil calendar. At Temple we encourage the observance on the Hebrew date. Whichever calendar is followed, it should be done by agreement with all the members of the

family, so that all observe the Yahrzeit at the same time.

On the eve preceding the date of the Yahrzeit, a light is kindled in the home of every mourner, and is kept burning for twenty-four hours. It need not be a candle or an oil lamp. Any type of light is permitted, provided it is in addition to whatever lights are used for illumination.

YIZKOR: The Jewish calendar provides four occasions during the year when special memorial services are held: Yom Kippur, Shemini Atzeret (last day of Sukkot), the last day of Pesach, and Shavuot. The practice of keeping children (who still have parents) away from these memorial services is based on superstition and therefore is not approved by Reform Judaism. On the contrary, children ought to be exposed to the opportunity of seeing their parents honour the memory of dear ones.

READING OF NAMES: Our Temple makes provision for the reading of the names of the deceased at Daily, Shabbat and Holy Day services on the actual date of **Yahrzeit**. While we encourage the observance of the date by the Hebrew calendar, we will read the name on the date requested by the family.

At Yizkor services the names of those deceased since the last Yizkor are read. On Yom Kippur we read the names of all who have died during the preceding year.

If you wish a name included for reading please inform the Senior Rabbi's secretary.

MEMORIAL PLAQUE: The Temple provides opportunities for special tablets in the Sanctuary. Erection of a tablet signifies the obligation of the Congregation to observe Yahrzeit in perpetuity. Lights are kindled on the plaque in observance of Yahrzeit, but this does not relieve the family of the obligation to kindle a Yahrzeit light at home. Those wishing to provide for a Memorial Plaque should contact the Executive Director's office.

TOMBSTONE: No special period or time is customary for the setting of a tombstone. Generally it is done within the year and not later than the first anniversary of death. The stone may be dedicated with a service led by a member of the family. You may ask the Rabbi's office for a copy of the Unveiling Service, or find one on pp. 208-215 in *Gates of the House*. Should you wish a rabbi or cantor to be present at the dedication please call the Senior Rabbi's office. The occasion should be observed privately; public announcements should be avoided lest a "second funeral" be held instead of a simple unveiling ceremony.

MEMORIALS: It is a mitzvah to establish an appropriate memorial in honour of the deceased in addition to the tombstone. The family should seek some living memorial in the form of tzedakah which will be suitable. Our Temple provides for the erection of special memorials, gifts to the Endowment Fund, the acquisition of art and ritual objects, and the establishment of scholarships which are meant to strengthen our Jewish community and Jewish life. In pursuing the establishment of a memorial, the Senior Rabbi and Chairperson of the Memorials Committee will be happy to meet and consult with you and your family.

PRAYER FOR KERIAH:

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה, יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ, מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, דִּין הָאֱמֶת.

Ba-ruch a-ta, A-do-nai E-lo-hei-nu, me-lech ha-o-lam, da-yan ha-e-met.
Blessed is the Lord our God, Ruler of the universe, the righteous Judge.

PRAYER FOR MEMORIAL LIGHT:

A heavy burden has fallen upon us and sorrow has bowed our heads.
Now we turn to You, O God, the Source of good, for comfort and help.
Give us the eyes to see that pain is not Your will, that somewhere there weeps with us One who feels our trouble and knows the suffering of our souls. Let us find You in the love of family and friends, in the sources of healing that are implanted within all the living, in the mind that conquers all infirmity and trouble. Grant us the strength to endure what cannot be escaped, and the courage to go on without bitterness or despair, basing our lives on the abiding foundations of Your Torah. Amen

נֵר-לְרַגְלִי דְבָרְךָ, וְאוֹר לְנִתְיָבָתִי.

Neir le-rag-li de-va-re-cha, ve-or li-ne-ti-va-ti.
Your word, Lord, is a lamp to my feet, a light to my path.

(The memorial light is kindled)

נֵר יְיָ נִשְׁמַת אָדָם.
בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה, יְיָ, נוֹטֵעַ בְּתוֹכֵנוּ חַיֵּי עוֹלָם.

Neir A-do-nai nish-mat a-dam.

Ba-ruch a-ta, A-do-nai, no-tei-a be-to-chei-nu cha-yei o-lam.

The human spirit is the lamp of God.

Blessed is the Eternal One, who has implanted within us eternal life.

PRAYER FOR CONCLUSION OF SHIVA

Lord of spirit and flesh, Source of life and all its mystery, the cup of sorrow has passed into our hands. Our loss is painful and we search of meaning.

Yet even in the midst of our sorrow we give thanks for the comfort others have brought us, for the love that flows from Your will through each of us.

Now we rise up to face the tasks of life once more.

There will be moments of doubt and hours of loneliness for a loved one has passed from our sight.

In our times of weakness may her (his) memory strengthen our spirit.

Teach us, O God, to give thanks for all that was deathless in the life of our beloved, _____ and which now is revealed to us in all its beauty. May we find support in a power of goodness and love that flows from You, O God, the Source of caring.

For the love that death cannot sever; for the friendship we shared along life's path; for those gifts of heart and mind which have now become a precious heritage; for all these and more, we are grateful. May we not dwell on our sorrow, but rather honour our beloved _____ by the quality of our lives.

Be praised O God, Source of all life.

יִתְגַּדַּל וַיִּתְקַדַּשׁ שְׁמֵהּ רַבָּא בְּעֻלְמָא דִּי־בְרָא כְרַעוּתָהּ,

Yit-ga-dal ve-yit-da-dash she-mei ra-ba be-al-ma di-ve-ra chi-re-u-tei,

וַיַּמְלִיךְ מַלְכוּתָהּ בְּחַיִּיכוֹן וּבְיוֹמֵיכוֹן וּבְחַיֵּי דְכָל־בֵּית

ve-yam-lich mal-chu-tei be-cha-yei-chon u-ve-yo-mei-chon u-ve-cha-yei de-chol beit

יִשְׂרָאֵל, בַּעֲגָלָא וּבְזִמְן קָרִיב, וְאָמְרוּ: אָמֵן.

Yis-ra-eil, ba-a-ga-la u-vi-ze-man ka-riv, ve-i-me-ru: a-mein.

יְהֵא שְׁמֵהּ רַבָּא מְבָרַךְ לְעָלַם וּלְעָלְמֵי עָלְמַיָּא.

Ye-hei she-mei ra-ba me-va-rach le-a-lam u-le-mei al-ma-ya.

יִתְבָּרַךְ וַיִּשְׁתַּבַּח, וַיִּתְפָּאֵר וַיִּתְרוֹמֵם וַיִּתְנַשֵּׂא, וַיִּתְהַדָּר

Yit-ba-rach ve-yish-ta-bach, ve-yit-pa-ar ve-yit-ro-man ve-yit-na-sei, ve-yit-ha-dar

וַיִּתְעַלֶּה. וַיִּתְהַלַּל שְׁמֵהּ דְקוּדְשָׁא, בְּרִיךְ הוּא, לְעָלָא מְן־כָּל־

ve-yit-a-leh ve-yit-ha-lal she-mei de-ku-de-sha, be-rich hu, le-ei-la min kol

בְּרַכְתָּא וְשִׁירְתָּא, תִּשְׁבַּחְתָּא וְנַחֲמָתָא דְאִמְרָן בְּעֻלְמָא,

bi-re-cha-ta ve-shi-ra-ta, tush-be-cha-ta ve-ne-che-ma-ta, da-a-mi-ran be-al-ma,

וְאָמְרוּ: אָמֵן.

ve-i-me-ru: a-mein.

יְהֵא שְׁלָמָא רַבָּא מְן־שְׁמַיָּא וְחַיִּים עָלֵינוּ וְעַל־כָּל־יִשְׂרָאֵל,

Ye-hei she-la-ma ra-ba min she-ma-ya ve-cha-yim a-lei-nu ve-al kol Yis-ra-eil,

וְאָמְרוּ: אָמֵן.

ve-i-me-ru: a-mein.

עֲשֵׂה שְׁלוֹם בְּמֵרוֹמָיו, הוּא יַעֲשֶׂה שְׁלוֹם עָלֵינוּ וְעַל־כָּל־

O-seh sha-lom bi-me-ro-mav, hu ya-a-seh sha-lom a-lei-nu ve-al kol

יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאָמְרוּ: אָמֵן.

Yis-ra-eil, ve-i-me-ru: a-mein.